

30 December 1959

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Dear

Your recent letter to Mr. Dulles has been referred to me for reply. You raise the interesting view, as I understand it, that the rigid indoctrination Soviet citizens receive will condition them to accept the same level of economic sacrifice in the future as in the past.

No one, of course, can pretend to read the future with a high degree of accuracy. However, there are some helpful guideposts which emerge from a study of the post-Stalin trend of consumer welfare in the Soviet Union. The housing and agricultural programs are combining to raise living standards significantly for the first time since the Communist revolution. It seems clear that the Khrushchev regime is being responsive to the demands of consumers for some of the benefits of four decades of industrialization. This moderate improvement, in turn, appears to have created a climate of rising consumer expectations which is leading to modest, but real, increases in the production of durable consumer goods.

We can, then, see the beginnings of an evolutionary trend, possibly aided by increasing contact of Soviet citizens with the West. No one can predict how rapidly (or how far) the trend of the past five years can be projected with confidence. However, the view of the USSR as an unchanging monolith, able to ignore the wishes of its citizens, must now be modified.

Sincerely yours,

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